

A child and an adult are shown from behind, holding up white paper airplanes against a bright, hazy sunset sky. The child, on the left, wears a light-colored dress with a small floral pattern. The adult, on the right, wears a red and black plaid shirt. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a warm, golden glow. The background is slightly blurred, showing some trees and a field.

**CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED
PARENTS TOOLKIT**

2022



**OKLAHOMA
COMMISSION ON
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

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**If any of the links or phone numbers in this toolkit do not work, please report via email to Nicole George at nicole.george@occy.ok.gov for a correction and update to this toolkit. Thank you.*



INTRODUCTION

This Toolkit is for you...

IF

- You are a caregiver of a child whose parent is in jail or prison
- Law enforcement came to your home and arrested your husband, wife, boyfriend, or girlfriend in front of the children
- You are a teacher or a school counselor whose student has a parent in prison or jail
- You are a teacher, and a child is asking difficult questions related to the criminal justice system
- You are a social worker looking for resources to help a foster parent with a child whose mother or father was arrested
- You operate a childcare center and your client had a run in with the legal system and needs some help to figure out options for their kids
- You are a caregiver, educator or service provider who has – or knows of – family members in the criminal justice system for a few days, months, a year, a decade or maybe for life
- You are incarcerated and are looking for resources for your children

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

The toolkit is designed for you, the caregiver, service provider or educator, to find answers to questions that may apply to you, a child, a client or a student. The resource list provides a wealth of free information available on the Internet.

We have divided this toolkit into various sections from family support programs, to tips for caregivers and educators, to finding answers to questions a child or a student may ask about their parent's arrest or incarceration.

This toolkit was written and edited by the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY) Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee, with the help of stakeholders, ranging from caregivers, parents, faith-based community members, counselors, educators, social workers, community leaders, child specialists, etc.

FAMILIES/CAREGIVERS/EDUCATORS/SERVICE PROVIDERS

When a child's parent goes to prison or jail, with rare exception, the child mourns. They may miss the parent who played with them, cooked for them, or watched TV with them, and doing these things may increase their sadness. If their incarcerated parent was not available before imprisonment, the child may mourn the loss of the hope of what might have been if only Mom or Dad had not gone away.

Either way, the time when a parent is imprisoned is a time when children wait and often hope. They wait for Mom or Dad to come back to take care of them, the way they did before, or they wait for the return of a parent who has been changed and "made better" by their time in prison. They also hope that this time Mom or Dad will stay.

The caregivers of children with incarcerated parents may have many things in common. They cope with the criminal justice system, deal with the impact on the children, must find ways to make ends meet, deal with their own feelings toward the child's parents, and struggle with how to answer children's questions. Each family and each caregiving circumstance are also unique.

Caregivers could be the incarcerated parent's parent, another grandparent, an aunt, or older sibling. A caregiver might be a family friend, foster parent or group home staff member. Some caregivers took on the responsibility by default because there was no one else, while others were already the guardians of the children before the parent became incarcerated.

Some caregivers are unrelated to the child by blood but are the friends, girlfriends, boyfriends or partners of one of the child's parents. Some children are in foster care with adults they did not know before their parent went to prison. In some cases, children move far away from the homes they were living in prior to their parent's arrest and incarceration and find themselves in new and unfamiliar environments.

Meanwhile, most caregivers are expected to raise the children, keep them connected in some way to their imprisoned parent, earn a living, and care for other members of the family. It may be difficult for caregivers to respond consistently to the feelings and behaviors of the children.

Other caring adults in the child's life such as teachers, health care providers, social workers, clergy, coaches, or librarians may or may not be trained to help children or their caregivers cope with this crisis. It may be helpful to share this resource with them as well if they are a trusted family support.

INFLUENCES ON THE CAREGIVERS' ABILITY TO COPE:

- The degree of familiarity they have with the child
- The intensity of change and upheaval in the child's life
- Economic stress/instability, or the oppression of poverty
- Degree of isolation, whether in urban, suburban or rural settings
- Caregiver's health and emotional well-being
- Quality of the child's school
- Caregiver's job satisfaction
- Community resources
- Support of family and friends
- Family spirituality and faith
- The impact of racial and ethnic prejudices
- Presence of knowledgeable professionals



WHAT DO CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS AND THEIR CAREGIVERS NEED?

(From interviews with Caregivers - Adalist-Estrin, Family and Corrections Network-FCN).

Every child, family and circumstance are different. Children will need different things from caregivers depending on their age, temperament and personality, the family circumstances, the facts and details of the crime, and the availability of outside resources.

Some examples of circumstances faced by children of incarcerated parents are:

- Parents who were not around much before their incarceration
- Parents who were unpredictable because of mental health or substance abuse
- Parents who were actively involved before jail or prison
- Trauma from witnessing a violent arrest or a history of traumatizing experiences
- Moving to a new city or state
- Changing schools or childcare arrangements
- Difficulty staying in contact with an incarcerated parent

MOST CAREGIVERS NEED:

- Support and understanding from friends, family, clergy, and the community
- Emotional support, such as counseling or group activities
- Information about children of incarcerated parents and services in the community
- Guidance on what is generally best for children and how to answer their questions
- Rules, boundaries, and space in the home for the children, the family, and the caregiver
- Opportunities for respite care and relief from the duties of caregiving
- Help with managing the needs and services that are all too often fragmented, unavailable, or costly

MOST CHILDREN OF AN INCARCERATED PARENT NEED:

- Consistent, caring adults who understand that, in general, children love their parents, even when they have committed a crime
- People who will not condemn the incarcerated parents as worthless
- People who will understand that children of prisoners feel angry, sad, confused, and worried
- A chance to express these feelings and learn to cope with them
- A chance to learn and practice skills and keep busy with activities
- Faith or affiliation with a community that can provide meaning for the child beyond their own crisis
- People who can help them to maintain contact with their incarcerated parent or parents or explain to them why they cannot maintain contact

FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS

When a family member, such as a mom or dad, goes to prison, it can be very difficult for everyone involved. For some children, the experience could be emotionally devastating or even traumatic. For others, it may be less serious, and sometimes even a relief. The overall experience and impact of the child depends on the child's age, understanding of the situation, and reactions of others – particularly their family members.

Children may experience different feelings, multiple feelings at once, or one after the other in sequence. Sometimes these are feelings of sadness, guilt, fear, disbelief, anxiety, anger and/or powerlessness. It is important to help children understand and work through their feelings.

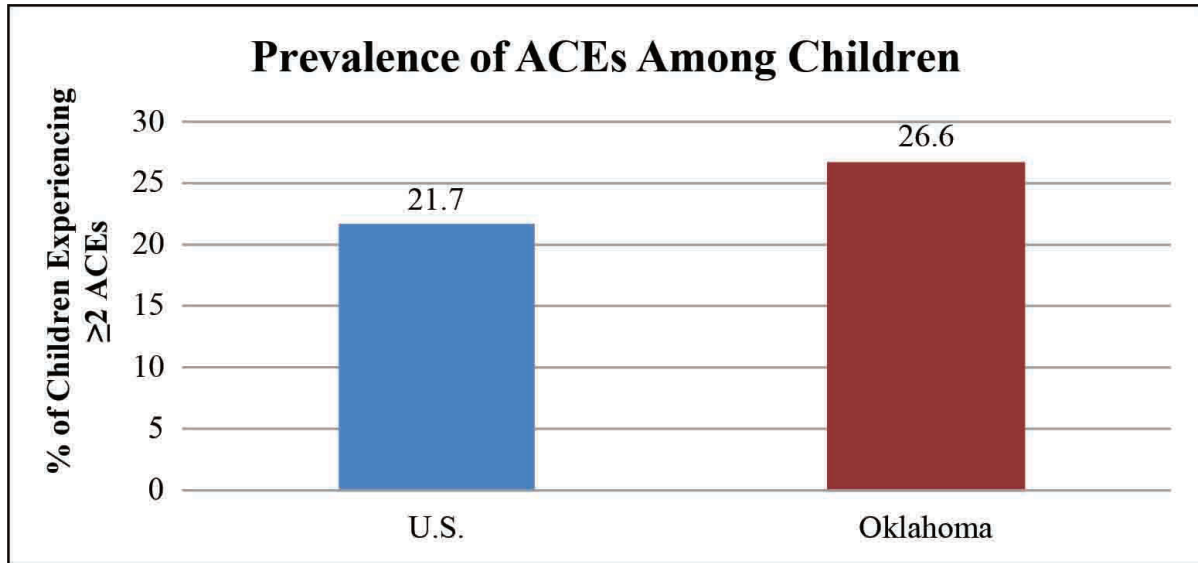
SCHOOL DIFFICULTIES

The stress of having a parent in jail or prison may affect a child's school performance. Strong emotions and the actions that go along with them can result in classroom challenges, social isolation, and other acting-out behaviors. The stress of having a parent in jail or prison may affect a child's school performance. Strong emotions and the actions that go along with them can result in classroom challenges, social isolation, and other acting-out behaviors.

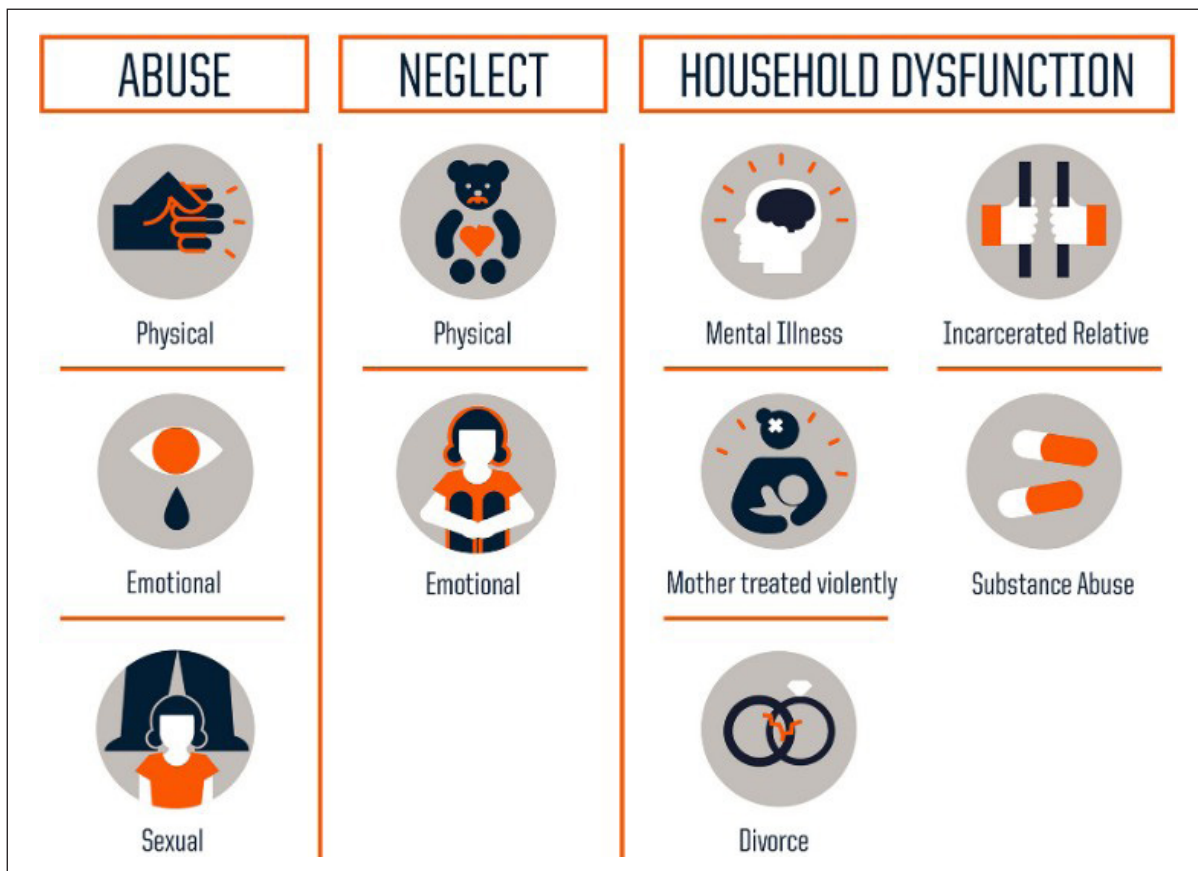
It is important to work closely with trusted adults at school to help your child have more success. Many times, teachers do not know about a difficult family situation. Having information about the home life of a student can help teachers be more understanding about difficult behaviors and can help them plan for what a child needs to help them learn. It is important to be aware of risk factors and to know that these do not define the child.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES) AND POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT (PYD): A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that may have lasting negative impacts. ACEs affect people at all income and social levels, and can have serious, costly impact across the lifespan by contributing to high levels of toxic stress that derail healthy physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Forty-six percent of children in the United States have experienced at least one ACE (Sacks, 2014). The more ACEs a child experiences, the more likely they are to experience health problems, poor academic achievement, and substance abuse later in life. Oklahoma ranks number one in percentage of children with an ACE score of 2 or more. (Overall, 2020)



ACE's are categorized into three groups and are further divided into sub-groups as follows:

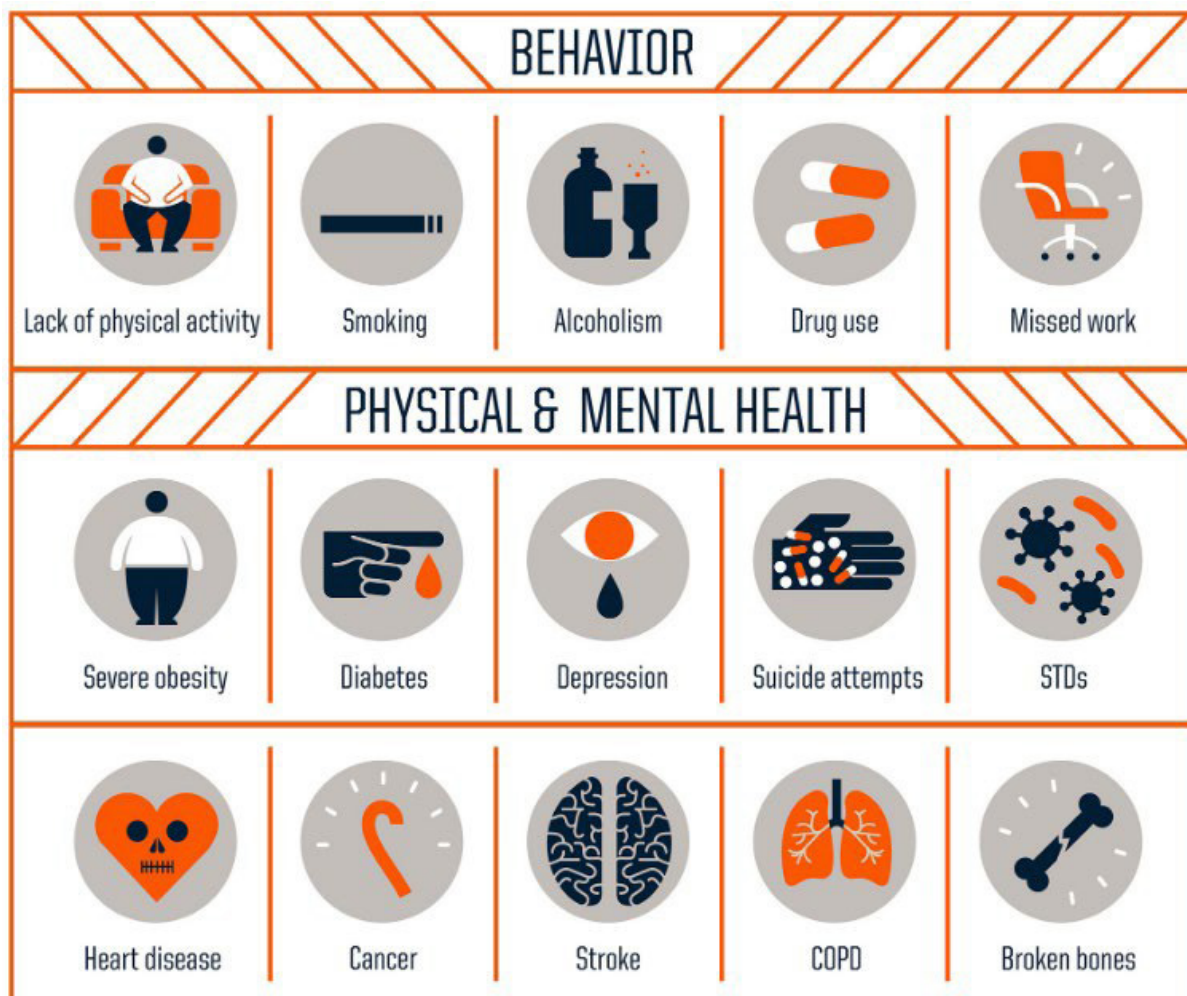


(Starecheski, 2015)

ACE's have been linked to risky health behaviors, chronic health conditions, low potential for the future, and early death (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, 2016). Below-average teacher-reported academic and literacy skills along with behavior problems in kindergarten have been found in children under five years old with ACE exposure (Jimenez, 2016).

Children ages 3 to 5 who have had two or more ACEs are over four times more likely to have trouble calming themselves down, be easily distracted, and have a hard time making and keeping friends.

The good news is, individual, community, and familial strengths facilitate recovery and build resilience (APA, 2008). Despite their enduring influence, ACEs can be offset by the presence of PACEs, Protective and Compensatory Experiences (protective factors), which give children the opportunity to



(Starecheski, 2015)

build resilience. Existing protective factors can insulate children from traumatic experiences. Protective factors that are especially helpful in this demographic include, safety, stability, ability to regulate emotion, and a secure attachment to a caregiver (Buss, 2015). Families should know that maintaining at least one positive, healthy relationship with an encouraging adult is important for developing resilience. By reducing families' sources of stress, providing children and adults with responsive relationships, and strengthening the core life skills we all need to adapt and thrive, we can prevent and counteract any lasting harm of adverse experiences.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) allows for a variety of objectives that affect risk factors, protective factors, and youth trajectory toward positive adult outcomes. PYD objectives include:

Bonding

- the emotional attachment between a child and various groups
- allows children to develop social connections

Resilience

- a person's ability to face and overcome adverse situations
- promotes flexibility in times of change and stress

Social/Emotional/Cognitive/Behavioral/Moral Competence

- promotes integration of feelings, thoughts, and actions to move toward goals
- provides skills in processing change

Self Determination

- allows children to enhance confidence in thinking on their own
- promotes advocating for oneself and living according to internal standards (Catalano, 1998)

Spirituality

- traditionally centered on moral and social behavior, now viewed more holistically
- an understanding between one's inward and outward journey (Positive Youth Development and Spirituality: From Theory to Research, 2008)

Self-Efficacy

- youth belief they can achieve goals with learned skills such as goal setting and coping
- promotes a clear and positive identity (Erik Erikson's Stages of Psychosocial Development, 2015)

Clear & Positive Identity

- may include ethnicity, gender, family, culture, and community
- fosters a positive identification with a sub-group or culture (Catalano, 1998)

Belief in the Future

- having hope in long term goals (attending college, finding employment, having choices)
- provides protective factors for youth by seeing a future

Recognition for Positive Behavior

- reacting to desired actions from youth
- rooted in reinforcement theory

Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

- allowing children to participate in positive social interactions
- creating an environment for this behavior

Prosocial Norms

- embracing healthy beliefs and clear standards
- identifying expectations

It is never too late to build the protective habits and environments that promote resilience and recovery.

To learn more about ACE's and PYD please search for the following webpages:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention CDC – Kaiser ACE Study](#)
- [National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges Finding Your ACE Score](#)
- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network About Child Trauma](#)
- [Youth.gov Positive Youth Development](#)

TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

1. Talk about feelings with children.

“You look sad. Are you missing Daddy?” Or, “When you get that angry at little things I wonder if you are also angry at your mom for going to jail?” or, “I wish your dad could have seen you play ball tonight, and I bet you do too.”

2. Using age-appropriate language, be as honest with children as possible.

“Mommy won’t be coming home for a very long time. It will be four more birthdays (or two more summer vacations).”

3. Remember to keep your feelings separate from each child’s.

“We feel different things about this. I am angry at your dad and don’t really want to see him, but I want you to go because he’s your dad and you love him.”

4. Set up family discussion times.

Tuesday night is the family “meeting.” Or Wednesday night is “Let’s wait for dad’s call tonight and talk about how we are all doing with this.” Or Saturday morning’s breakfast, “Prison and jail talk is off limits.” This can be a moment of relief to those who need a break from the subject.

5. Talk about the family’s choice to tell others or keep it a secret from certain people.

Let children know why the choice is necessary. Provide plenty of opportunity to talk about it at home.

6. Encourage children to write or talk to their parents whenever possible.

7. Help children start a picture or story that their parent adds to, and then the child adds on, and so on by mailing it back and forth.

8. Read with your children. Encourage your library to include books and pamphlets about children of incarcerated parents in its collection.

9. Get support and help for the children and yourself through friends, clergy or counselors.

By Ann Adalist-Estrin, Children of Prisoners Library, Family and Connections Network. Copyright 2003.

QUESTIONS A CHILD MIGHT ASK WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER GOES TO PRISON

There are no answers that fit all difficult questions that a child may ask. Each circumstance is unique. This toolkit is designed for you to go through the information and pick out what may apply to you.

In most cases, a prison sentence will be another immediate family crisis, the worst-case scenario. Until now, adults and children in the family could hope for a better outcome such as a suspended sentence, deferred imposition of sentence, or a prison alternative. At this point in the process, it is certain that the family member won't be coming home any time soon. On the other hand, if the family member committed crimes against the children or other adults in the family, a prison sentence guarantees a respite from the hurt, perhaps permanently, and might be a relief. Prisons and jails are similar in appearance, but they have different purposes. Jails are temporary holding facilities operated by cities, counties, and tribal governments. Suspects go to jail after arrest and before a court hearing or trial if they are not granted bond (or bail). Offenders convicted of misdemeanors in Oklahoma may also serve their sentences in local jails, often in the community in which they committed their crimes. Offenders sometimes remain in county jails for months after sentencing.

Prisons in Oklahoma are large, secure facilities designed for felony offenders serving longer sentences. Prisons have more treatment, education, and exercise options than jails.

Jails and prisons are a place where people who have been accused or convicted of crimes are confined or incarcerated. Generally, people stay in jail if they are sentenced for less than a year or if they are waiting for their trial. If they receive a sentence for more than a year, they go to prison. People who are incarcerated are often called inmates.

The Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) recognizes that incarceration not only affects those incarcerated but also their family and friends. ODOC has created a handbook to help answer questions that you may have regarding sentencing to the Oklahoma prison system.

This book, Guide for Families & Friends of offenders: State of Oklahoma Corrections Department, is intended to provide general information. An appendix of correctional facilities contract information is available at the end of the handbook. You can access their website by going to: [Inmate and Family Resources \(oklahoma.gov\)](https://www.inmateandfamilyresources.oklahoma.gov)

10 QUESTIONS A YOUNG CHILD MIGHT ASK

1. When can I see or talk to my family member?

"I will find out what the visiting rules are and help you see him." If you have a family member held in a jail, contact the jail for more information on how to arrange contact. Each jail has different visitation procedures. Some information can be found on each local jail's website. For prison visiting rules, visit www.ok.gov/doc/ and click on "Facilities" at the top of the web page.

2. When is my family member coming home?

"We believe (s)he might come home after two summers," or "after three birthdays," or "when you are 12 years old." Be careful not to give a child a firm date because prison release dates can change for many reasons, including parole (early release) or new criminal charges (extended stay). If you are reasonably certain when the sentence will end, try using a reference date that is important to the child.

3. Will my family member be safe?

"People who work at the prison are called correctional officers. They are much like police officers. They work very hard to make sure that your family member and the others who are incarcerated are safe. You will be safe when you visit."

4. Where will my family member sleep?

"Your family member will sleep in a bed sort of like a camp cot in a small room with a door, called a cell. (S)he will probably share a cell with at least one other person."

5. What will (s)he wear?

"People who are incarcerated wear identical uniforms that look like doctor or nurse 'scrubs.' They also have socks and shoes, provided by the prison."

6. What will (s)he eat?

"The prison serves three meals a day on trays in a cafeteria similar to the one you have at school. Some people in prison eat meals in their cells. They can also buy snacks from a prison shop called a commissary."

7. How will my family member spend his/her time in prison?

“People read books, write letters, and go outside or to a gym for exercise. They attend classes that help them learn how to obey rules, be better parents, stop drinking alcohol or taking drugs, and be less angry. Most prisons have classes for incarcerated parents who want to earn their high school diploma, GED or study for college.”

8. What will it be like to visit prison?

Every prison is different. You will be informed about the rules in advance. This is a general answer to help children envision the visit and perhaps lessen their fear: “You will be with me (or other adult caregiver) the entire time. Before we go, the prison will tell us what we can wear and what we can and cannot bring into the prison. Going into the prison will be sort of like going through airport security (if the child has been to an airport). We will be checked to be sure we don’t have cell phones or other things that are not allowed in prison. We will visit in a special room with tables and chairs. Most prison visiting areas have books and toys for children to enjoy. Your family member will meet us there.”

9. Will anyone hurt us?

“The people who work at the prison will keep us safe. You will not be left alone at any time in the prison. It might be scary at first to be in a prison but no one will hurt us.” Public safety is the top priority at ODOC correctional facilities. Staff will take any action necessary to protect visitors, other staff and those who are incarcerated. Visits include some risks, which staff members will explain to visitors. Young children probably do not need to be told that a prison visit involves risk. However, it might be a good idea to explain that a stranger (security staff) will be touching them during the search.

10. What if I do something wrong? Will I have to go to prison?

“If you do something wrong, you will have a consequence like ‘time out’ or not riding your bike for three days. You will not go to prison.”

FAMILY/CAREGIVERS: SHOULD I APPLY FOR THIS?

If you are taking care of a child whose parent is in jail or prison, you may need assistance. Getting answers to questions and finding services, programs and support can be confusing and overwhelming.

You may be eligible to receive help if you're dealing with the following situations: eviction, lack of food, homelessness, pregnancy, medical issues, utility shut-off, domestic violence, medical emergency, non-receipt of benefits, dental, mental health services, child care needed due to work, or circumstances which present harm to the client or others.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP provides seasonal assistance to low-income households to assist with winter heating and summer cooling costs, and to provide emergency help for some families who have received utility cut-off notices. Apply at your local Oklahoma Human Services (OKDHS) office in December and July for heating and cooling assistance. Check with your local utility company and ask if there are other assistance programs.

[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP (formerly Food Stamps) enables low-income families to buy nutritious food with Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards. Children may be eligible for SNAP assistance even if their parents are not. If parents are ineligible for SNAP because they are incarcerated, their children may still be eligible for benefits. The child(ren)'s guardian(s) or caregiver(s) may apply on behalf of the child(ren) or may include them as a part of their own SNAP household if they are also participating in the program. Apply at your local OKDHS office or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Child Support Services

OKDHS Child Support Services helps to ensure that both parents are providing the financial support their children need. The parent who is not incarcerated may want to apply for TANF. If so, the state may proceed with a child support case when the application is reviewed. You may want to talk to the incarcerated parent about working with the child support office to request a review and adjustment that reflects actual income during the incarceration period. For more information contact your local OKDHS office or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

TANF is a federally funded program for children deprived of support because of a parent's death, incapacity, absence or unemployment. Cash assistance is available to the family on a time-limited basis through TANF. The purpose of this federal program is to provide temporary support in meeting basic needs, training leading to employment, employment services and childcare assistance for qualified families with children.

[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Child Welfare Services

Child Welfare Services is required to engage parents, including absent and noncustodial parents, in case planning for their children in foster care whenever possible and appropriate even if the parents are incarcerated. For more information call your local OKDHS office or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

To report child abuse or neglect, call the statewide Child Abuse Hotline at any time, at 1-800-522- 3511 or your local county OKDHS office during business hours. You will be asked to give the child's name, address and specifics about what happened – how they were harmed or neglected.

Child Care Assistance

The Oklahoma Human Services (OKDHS) helps to pay for the cost of child-care for children up to age 13 while the parent(s) work or go to school. Application for the program is made through the local county OKDHS office. For information call 1-844-834-8314 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA)

Many children remain eligible or gain eligibility for Medicaid coverage (SoonerCare) while their parents are incarcerated. The Oklahoma Health Care Authority (OHCA) is responsible for administering the Oklahoma Medicaid Program and oversight of all state purchased health care. For information call the OHCA helpline at 1-800-987-7767 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma County Health Departments

Oklahoma currently has county health departments and two independent city-county health departments serving all 77 counties. Each department offers a variety of services, such as immunizations, family planning, maternity education, well-baby clinics, adolescent health clinics, hearing and speech services, child developmental services, environmental health ser-

vices, and the SoonerStart early intervention program. For information call the Oklahoma State Department of Health at 1-800- 522-0203 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program

If you are caring for a child between the ages of 0 and 5 you may qualify for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. This program is provided throughout the state in county health departments, clinics, hospitals, and health centers. For more information [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Build Healthy Relationships and Enhance Child Development

The Child Guidance Program at the Oklahoma State Department of Health housed in the Family Support and Prevention Service, aims to build healthy family relationships and enhance child development. The program provides behavioral health, child development, parent education, and speech-language services. These services are provided on a sliding fee scale based on income and size of family. No one will be turned away for inability to pay. For more information call 405-426-8000, visit your local health department, or go to the Child Guidance Program [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Social Security

Persons convicted of crime and incarcerated for more than 30 continuous days no longer receive social security retirement or disability payments while serving their sentences. But family members eligible to receive a portion of the incarcerated person's benefits should continue receiving payments. For more information call 1-800-772-1213 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Social Security Cards

You do not have to be the child(ren)'s legal guardian to obtain Social Security cards for them. All U.S. citizens need a copy of their birth certificate or baptismal record. For more information contact the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213, [\(Click here for Website\)](#) or go in person to your nearest Social Security Office.

Birth Certificates

The Oklahoma State Department of Health Division of Vital Records is responsible for registering every birth. For general information call 405-426-8000 or to get a birth/death certificate go to Birth Certificates. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Enrolling Children in School

You don't have to be the legal guardian of a child to enroll the child in public school. Children of incarcerated parents may be considered homeless if they are living with a caregiver who is not their parent or court-ordered guardian. For the purpose of school, children can get assistance for education under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

If you have questions about a child's eligibility under McKinney-Vento or need help accessing services for a student, contact the local public school. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

If you have a child with developmental disabilities or chronic medical conditions, you or the child may have special questions and need special assistance. Schools are required to assess children with learning disabilities and provide a free and appropriate education. For more information contact the Oklahoma State Department of Education, Special Education Services at 405-521-3351 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Reduced-Price/Free Breakfast or Lunch

You can apply for this program at any time during the school year, but keep an eye out for the application, which may be sent home with your child during the first week of school. For more information contact your local school district or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Enrolling Children in Head Start and Early Head Start

These programs provide a comprehensive program of childcare, education, health, mental health, nutrition, parent involvement and services for children with disabilities. Early Head Start is for children from birth to age 3; Head Start is for children age 3-5. Eligibility is based on family income. For more information [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Homelessness Resources

Sisu Youth Services – [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

The Homeless Alliance [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Department of Education: Homeless Liaison Directory
[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

ADDITIONAL OKLAHOMA PROGRAMS AND AGENCIES THAT OFFER SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TO FAMILIES

Oklahoma 2-1-1 Helpline

Resources for food, clothing, shelter, and financial assistance can be found at Oklahoma 2-1-1. It is a free and confidential community helpline available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 2-1-1 helps people access information they need to navigate the ever increasing and complex array of human services. For community, housing and financial assistance resources dial 2-1-1. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Salvation Army

The Salvation Army operates service centers in communities across Oklahoma. Services include food distribution, children's programs, disaster relief, rehabilitation centers, and more. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (ODMHSAS)

For information about drug/alcohol dependence and prevention, call the Reach Out Hotline at 1-800-522- 9054 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#). Teens can talk to a peer who is trained to assist callers with any concerns including drugs and alcohol by contacting Teenline at 1-800-522-8336, between the hours of 3pm and midnight.

Center on Child Abuse & Neglect

The Center on Child Abuse and Neglect offers assessment and treatment for children who have been abused or neglected, adolescent sex offenders, and women and the children of women who used inappropriate substances during pregnancy. They also provide assessments for children at high-risk for abuse or neglect. For more information call 405-271-8858 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness

Smart Start is Oklahoma's statewide early childhood initiative and serves as the state's Early Childhood Advisory Council. Smart Start Oklahoma's focus on early childhood, strengthening families and school readiness seeks to provide better opportunities to children and families in Oklahoma. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

The Oklahoma Association of Youth Services

Oklahoma Youth Services Agency provides counseling, mentoring, first offender programs, shelters, intervention centers, and youth services.

[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Association of Community Action Agencies

Community Action Agencies are locally governed non-profit organizations that work to improve the lives of low-income individuals by creating opportunities for increased self-sufficiency and greater participation in the community. Community Action Agencies serve all 77 counties in Oklahoma. For more information call 405-949-1495 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth (OCCY)

The Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth works to improve services to children through planning, coordinating, and communicating with communities and between public and private agencies; independent monitoring of the children and youth service system; and testing models and demonstration programs for effective services. For more information call 405-606-4900 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Calm Waters

Help for children and families in their grief journey caused by death, divorce or other significant loss. For more information call 405-841-4800 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Warmline for Oklahoma Child Care Providers

The Warmline for Oklahoma Child Care Providers coordinated by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services offers free telephone consultation on numerous topics of concern from providing support, practical advice and resources about parent-child relationships and the behavior and development of children from infants to teens. Consultants answer the Warmline Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. For more information call 1-888-574-5437 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#) or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Child Care Resource & Referral Association (OCCRRA)

The OCCRRRA is an organization devoted to serving communities statewide in ways that enhance Oklahoma's childcare resources. Information is available on training, as well as listings of licensed childcare facilities, with links to local child care resource and referral agencies. For more information, call

1-888-962-2772 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)

The child may have a court appointed CASA volunteer. The CASA volunteer's role is to ensure that the rights of the child are represented in all proceedings. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Department of Corrections (DOC)

The State of Oklahoma Corrections Department Guide for Families and Friends of Offenders is a complete 60-page guide to the prison system in Oklahoma. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

A quick FAQ reference for Oklahoma prisons is also available by visiting [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Indian Tribe Education Guides

A comprehensive list of education guides for Oklahoma Indian Tribes is available [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Native American Resource Guide

The Oklahoma Digital Prairie provides the Native American Resource guide with a list of programs and resources by visiting [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Tribal Behavioral Health Resource Directory

A list of tribal behavioral health resources can be found by [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Oklahoma Latino & Hispanic Resources

Hispanic Resource Center of the Tulsa City-County Library provides the opportunity to learn about Latino history and culture. Strengthening cultural and community connections is a protective factor for building resilience during adversity. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Latino Community Development Agency resources are available to help strengthen your family with protective factors that can help with resilience, self-reliance, and knowledge about community resources. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

MENTORING, SUPPORTS AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma (BBBSOK)

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma's mentoring programs are designed to create positive, measurable outcomes for youth, including educational success, avoidance of risky behaviors, higher aspirations, greater confidence, and better relationships. BBBS match children (called Littles) with caring adult role models (called Bigs). Bigs share experiences with Littles that expand their world in new ways. BBBSOK services are available in the metro areas of Bartlesville, Norman, Oklahoma City, Shawnee, Stillwater and Tulsa. For more information, [\(Click here for Website\)](#) or call 918-728-7919.

Girl Scouts

Girl Scouts is an organization that promotes leadership, success, and adventure in a safe, no-limits environment designed by girls for girls. Girl Scouts aims to develop a strong sense of self, positive values, learning from setbacks, healthy relationships, and problem-solving skills. Girl Scouts participation is available to youth in grades K-1 (Daisies), 2-3 (Brownies), 4-5 (Juniors), 6-8 (Cadettes), 9-10 (Seniors), and 11-12 (Ambassadors). For more information or to find a local Girls Scout program [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars of Oklahoma

Girl Scouts of Eastern Oklahoma The Girl Scouts Beyond Bars program works with girls with incarcerated mothers, providing support and transportation to visit and maintain contact. For more information call 918-749-2551 or toll-free 800-707-9914 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA)

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America provides safe places for children to grow and thrive, engaging programs focused on academics, health, and leadership, and trained staff who guide, coach, and motivate kids to be successful. Programs are available for age groups 6 to 9, 10 to 12, 13 to 15, and 16+ years. To locate your nearest Boys and Girls Club call 404-487-5700 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Scouts BSA

Scouts BSA offers a variety of programs including: Cub Scouts for youth grades K-5, Scouts BSA for youth 11-17 years old, Venturing Co-ed 14-20 years old, Sea Scouting Co-ed 14-20 years old, and Exploring Co-ed 10-20 years old. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)



Being a Cub Scout means you are a member of a worldwide youth movement that stands for certain values and beliefs. Young people of different ages have different ranks in Cub Scouting from Tiger Cub (age 7) to Webelos Scout (age 10). [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

4-H Youth Development

This program is for grades 3rd-12th can participate and provides kids with community, mentors, and learning opportunities to develop skills they need to create positive change in their lives and communities. A few of their activities include gardening, science, agriculture, arts, STEM, healthy living, civic engagement and more. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

A number of services are available to grandparents raising grandchildren (and other relatives serving as guardians). To learn about services, resources or to receive a copy of "Starting Points for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren," contact your local Area Agency on Aging 1-800-211-2116 or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Angel Tree

Angel Tree Camping provides religious ministry and support to the children and families of the incarcerated by distributing holiday gifts to their children and providing a children's camping program. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

New Hope Oklahoma

New Hope is a Tulsa-based non-profit organization dedicated to providing services for children of incarcerated parents. ([Click here for Website](#))

New Day Camp

New Day Camp provided through the Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries of Oklahoma (CJAMM) is for children who have at least one incarcerated parent and are 8 to 11 and 12 to 14 years old. The camp is hosted at Lake Texoma and includes activities to address the special needs this group of young people may have. ([Click here for Website](#))

Little Light Ministries Christian School

Little Light Christian School is a non-traditional elementary school serving children in grades K-6 who have a parent who has been or is now in jail or prison. ([Click here for Website](#))

Redeeming the Family's Oklahoma Messages Project

The Oklahoma Messages Project films parents in prison reading books for their children in an effort to maintain and improve the parent-child relationship, boost literacy, and improve the child's social, emotional, and educational outcomes. The DVDs are mailed to the child(ren) with the book or poems on the video. ([Click here for Website](#))

Oklahoma Family Network (OFN)

The Oklahoma Family Network is Oklahoma's parent-to-parent mentorship network for those raising children with special medical needs, developmental delays or a disability. OFN provides support to families through parent-to-parent mentorship and educational training. Call 1-877-871-5072 or ([Click here for Website](#))

INTERNET LINKS

The Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee provides these Internet links as a service to caregivers. If you do not have access to the Internet, try your local library or ask a friend to print materials from a home computer.

Other Toolkits and Guides

- **A Toolkit for Working with Children of Incarcerated Parents**
[\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Promising Practices Toolkit: Working with Drug Endangered Children and their Families**
[\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Sesame Street Resources**
[\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **The Adoption and Safe Families Act: Barriers to Reunification Between Children and Incarcerated Parents**
[\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Tips for Parents, Teachers and Other Caregivers for Talking with Children Who Have Experienced Traumatic Events**
[\(Click here for Website\)](#) or [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **The National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated** [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

- **Office of Community and Faith Engagement (State of Oklahoma)** The Office of Community and Faith Engagement helps Oklahoma's poor and disadvantaged by linking government with faith-based and community organizations to provide social services. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Oklahoma Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries**
[\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Prison Fellowship Ministries**
[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

READING LISTS AND VIDEOS FOR CHILDREN, CAREGIVERS AND PROVIDERS

The following books were written to help children understand the experience of having a mother or father in prison or jail. When a parent, counselor or caregiver reads these books to children, it can help create the opportunity to talk more about the child's feelings to help them process and cope.

Rocky's Road: A Coloring Book for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Author: Dr. Janice M. Beal (2014)

Daddy's Big House

Author: Corey Beauford and Marilyn Garin (2014)

Little Jo Joe visits his dad in his new big house.

Finding the Right Spot: When Kids Can't Live with Their Parents

Author: Janice Levy (2004)

A story of resilience and loyalty hope and disappointment, love, sadness, and anger too.

Kennedy's Big Visit

Author: Daphne Books (2015)

Little Kennedy is excited to visit her father again.

Knock Knock My Dad's Dream for Me

Author: Daniel Beaty (2013)

A father and son share a special bond and then one day dad does not come home, and no one talks about it. Later, the son receives a letter from his dad. Their special relationship continues.

Tell Me About When Mom and Dads Go to Jail

Author: Judi Goozh and Sue Jeweler (2018)

This book explains what jail is like and why some people have to go there, while reassuring children that their parent loves them, is safe, and is working hard to come home again.

The Night Dad Went to Jail: What to Expect When Someone You Love Goes to Jail

Author: Melissa Higgins (2013)

A little rabbit who loves to draw learns how to make it through the scary, sad, and mad times.

Welcome Home: Mommy Gets out Today

Author: Jamantha Williams Watson (2015)

This story aids youth who are experiencing the return of a parent who has been incarcerated.

What do I Say about That? Coping with an Incarcerated Parent

Author: Julia Cook (2015)

This book takes a unique look at the internal struggles a child faces when a parent is incarcerated. It explores and validates the roller coaster journey of emotions that children of incarcerated parents endure. It also gives insight to the process of healing and coping.

What will happen to me?

Author: Howard Zehr (2010)

This book brings together photographic portraits of 30 children whose parents are incarcerated, along with their thoughts and reflections, in their own words. It includes ten questions often asked by children with a parent in prison.

When Dad was Away

Author: Liz Weir and Karin Littlewood (2013)

This is a gentle and sensitive story showing how one family comes through a difficult time of separation.

A Terrible Thing Happened

Author: Margaret Holmes (Magination Press, 2000)

His gently told and tenderly illustrated story is for children who have witnessed any kind of violent or traumatic episode...an afterword for parents or caregivers offers extensive suggestions for helping traumatized children.

My Daddy is in Jail

Author: Janet Bender (Youth Light Inc., 2008)

This is a long overdue resource for helping children cope with the incarceration of a loved one. It includes a read-aloud story, discussion guide and optional small group counseling activities.

What is Jail, Mommy?

Author: Jackie Stanglin (Lifevest Publishing, 2006)

"One day after visiting...a little girl blurted out to her mother in frustration, 'What is jail anyway and why can't Daddy be home with us?'"

When Andy's Father Went to Prison

Author: Martha W. Hickman (Whitman and Company, 1990)

This book illustrates the experiences of a young boy whose father went to prison, including his experiences at home and at school.

Empowering Children of Incarcerated Parents

Author: Stacey Burgess, Tonia Caselman and Jennifer Carsey

A workbook for children in grades 2-6 for counselors, social workers, psychologists and teachers who work with children who have a parent in jail or prison. Designed to be used with students individually or in small groups.

Visiting Day

Author: Jacqueline Woodson (Scholastic Press, 2002)

This book follows the experiences of a young girl and her grandmother who take the bus to visit her father in prison. This book has rich illustrations and features an African American family.

Mama Loves Me from Away

Author: Pat Brisson (Boyds Mills Press, 2004)

A heartbreaking yet loving story about a mother and a child separated by a prison, and how they try to stay in touch despite the physical distance between them.

Little Children, Big Challenges: Incarceration

This Sesame Street program includes videos for the kids to watch, materials to read, and worksheets that can be printed on your home printer. There are also materials for parents and caregivers. ([Click here for Website](#))

The Prison Alphabet: An Educational Coloring Book for Children of Incarcerated Parents

Author: Dr. Bahiyyah Muhammad (2014)

This book is divided into two sections. The first section is a coloring book and uses the letters of the alphabet to explain in a child-friendly manner what life is like inside a prison using terms associated with incarceration. The second section contains a discussion guide to help caretakers and counselors explain parental incarceration to a young child.

A Sentence of Their Own

"Chronicles one family's annual pilgrimage to a New Hampshire state prison, revealing the damaging impact incarceration has on families." A film by Edgar Barrens (2001).

Bill of Rights for Children of Incarcerated Parents

San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership.

([Click here for Website](#))



RESOURCES FOR POLICYMAKERS

- **Safeguarding Children of Arrested Parents:** Bureau of Justice Assistance U.S. Department of Justice: [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Child Welfare Information Gateway** [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Promising Practices Toolkit** [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **The Echoes of Incarceration Projects:** Young filmmakers with incarcerated parents created a film about their experience. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Caring Through Struggle: Caregivers of Children with Incarcerated Parents.** [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Keeping Children Safe when their Parents are Arrested: Local Approaches that Work** [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Children of Incarcerated Parents, National Conference of State Legislatures, Steve Christian, March 2009.** [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Every Door Closed: Barriers Facing Parents with Criminal Records** Amy E. Hirsch, et al., Center for Law and Social Policy, Community Legal Services, 2002, [\(Click here for Website\)](#)
- **Children of Incarcerated Parents: An Action Plan for Federal Policymakers** Justice Center, The Council of State Governments, 2009, [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

- **Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children**, The Bureau of Justice Statistics Report Glaze, L. and Maruschak, L., August 2008, revised March 2010, ([Click here for Website](#))
- **Oklahoma Study of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children Phase 1, 2 and 3** Author: Susan F. Sharp, Ph.D., Study of Incarcerated Women and Their Children in Oklahoma, October 2004, 2005, ([Click here for Website](#))
- **No Sympathy**. Report to the Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth Author: Susan F. Sharp, Ph.D., Study of Incarcerated Women and Their Children in Oklahoma, January 2010, ([Click here for Website](#))
- **Oklahoma Study of Incarcerated Mothers and Their Children – 2014** Author: Susan F. Sharp, Ph.D., David Axlyn McLeod, Ph.D, MSW, Melissa S. Jones, MA, ([Click here for Website](#))
- **Oklahoma Children of Incarcerated Parents Advisory Committee**
Oklahoma Commission on Children and Youth
([Click here for Website](#))
- **The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health Across the Lifespan (US DHHS CDC, 2008)** This report succinctly summarizes the short and long-term effects on children of chronic and/or severe stress, including incarceration of a family member. Data focuses on the results of the Adverse ([Click here for Website](#))

BOOKS FOR CAREGIVERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Empowering Children of Incarcerated Parents

Author: Stacey Burgess, Tonia Caselman, Jennifer Carsey (Youth Light, 2009)
This book is for counselors, social workers, psychologists and teachers who work with children ages 7-12 who have a parent who is in jail or prison.

When a Parent Goes to Jail: A Comprehensive Guide for Counseling Children of Incarcerated Parents

Authors: Rebecca Yaffe and Lonnie Hoade (Rayve Productions Inc., 2000)
“This book could be used with individuals or small groups of children in therapeutic settings, but it also has a place on the shelf of every school and public library...to help children discuss and come to terms with having a parent in jail.” This is a book to read with children to help them understand their parent’s situation and their feelings.

All Alone in the World

Author: Nell Bernstein (New Press, 2005)

This groundbreaking book by an author who grew up with an incarcerated father includes stories and perspectives from families and children affected by incarceration, in addition to suggestions for policymakers and social service providers.

Children of Incarcerated Parents

Editors: Katherine Gabel and Denise Johnston (Lexington Books, 1995) "Children of criminal, jailed or imprisoned parents have long been identified as being at high risk for juvenile delinquency...this one-of-a-kind book outlines for professionals working with these children the optimum time to provide intervention following significant trauma, and shows that direct preventative and early intervention services to children of offenders can help them."

Family Arrested

Author: Ann Edenfield (Americana, 2002)

This is a highly useful summary written for families by a woman who had her husband incarcerated for many years. It offers tips for families on how to survive economically and emotionally.

Mothering from the Inside: Parenting in a Woman's Prison

Author: Sandra Enos (SUNY Press, 2001)

This book reveals how inmate mothers find places for their children to live, manage relationships with caregivers, demonstrate their fitness as mothers and negotiate rights to their children under challenging circumstances. It illustrates the impact of race, ethnicity and marginality.

Prisoners Once Removed: The Impact of Incarceration and Re-entry on Children, Families and Communities

Editors: Jeremy Travis and Michelle Waul (Urban Institute Press, 2003)

Addresses the difficult issues of parenting behind bars and fostering successful family relationships after release.

Loving Through Bars: Children with Parents in Prison

Author: Cynthia Martone (Santa Monica Press, 2005)

Offers a searing and poignant view of some of the estimated 2.3 million children in the United States who have a parent in prison, presenting their particular plights through a series of powerful stories.

Doing Time Together: Love and Family in the Shadow of Prison

Author: Megan Comfort (University of Chicago Press, 2008)

"Doing Time Together vividly details the ways that prisons shape and infiltrate the lives of women with husbands, fiancés and boyfriends behind bars. Megan Comfort spent years getting to know women visiting men at San Quentin State

Prison...tangling with the prison's intrusive scrutiny and rigid rules turns these women into quasi-inmates, eroding the boundary between home and prison...yet Comfort also finds that with social welfare weakened, prisons are the most powerful public institutions available to low-income women struggling to overcome untreated social ills...."

Loss, Trauma and Resilience: Therapeutic Work with Ambiguous Loss

Author: Pauline Boss (Norton, 2006) "Pauline Boss insightfully sees traumatic loss as a relational disorder and not an individual pathology. At a time when the violence and losses of war, terrorism and natural disasters [as well as the ambiguous loss of parents by children of the incarcerated] increasingly threaten to unravel the social fabric of entire communities, clinicians and humanitarian workers alike will welcome Boss's clear guidelines for strengthening connections in families to better cope with the stress of such ambiguous and difficult situations and find new sources of meaning and hope."

RESEARCH AND INFORMATION FOR PROVIDERS

Childhood Loss and Behavioral Problems: Loosening the Links

(Viboch, Vera, 2005) This article explains the connection between parental incarceration and child misbehavior. The effects of grief and loss, responding effectively to children's feelings of loss, helping kids understand parental incarceration, and fostering stability and security for children are presented. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Broken Bonds: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Children with Incarcerated Parents

(Vigne, Davies, Brazzell, Urban Institute, 2008) This report summarizes the impacts that the changes in daily life related to the incarceration of a parent brings to a family including the emotional and behavioral impacts on children and protective factors that help children build resilience. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

The Antisocial Behavior of the Adolescent Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Developmental Perspective

(Eddy and Reid, OSLC, 2002) This study summarizes the relationship between a parent's criminality and the antisocial behaviors of adolescents with incarcerated parents, the behaviors and symptoms that children and youth display when a parent is incarcerated, the effect of education programs in prison for parents, and effective interventions that can assist adolescent children of the incarcerated. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Families Left Behind: The Hidden Costs of Incarceration and Reentry

(Travis, McBride, Solomon, Urban Institute, 2005) Oriented towards social service providers, this report summarizes the effects of parental incarceration

tion on children including how imprisonment alters family dynamics, the challenges and benefits of visitation and contact, challenges of reunification, reintegration and the role that families have in providing support and stabilization. ([Click here for Website](#))

The Effects of Childhood Stress on Health across the Lifespan

This report succinctly summarizes the short and long-term effects on children of chronic and/or severe stress, including incarceration of a family member. Data focuses on the results of the Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Study. ([Click here for Website](#))

Parental Incarceration and Child Wellbeing in Fragile Families

This paper summarizes an extensive study of urban families with an incarcerated parent, including effects on economic outcomes, family stability and child development. ([Click here for Website](#))

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National Organizations

There are many national organizations that provide support or information.

Hope House Resources for Children of Prisoners

[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Bureau of Justice Statistics [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Prison Talk: An Online Community for Families of Prison Inmates

[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

The National Institute of Corrections' Resources Relating to Children of Inmates offers extensive information and resources for incarcerated parents and their families. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

Offender Preparation and Education Network Inc. (OPEN) provides self-help resources and other Information for offenders and families.

[\(Click here for Website\)](#)

San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership offers training and resources as well as information on their "Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights" project. [\(Click here for Website\)](#)

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Elizabeth Sazie, MD, MPH, Diane Ponder, LCSW and Juanita Johnson

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A Behavioral Health Toolkit for Providers Working with Children of the Incarcerated and their Families. (Washington State Department of Social & Health Services, 2009)

Children of Incarcerated Parents Web Portal. This website, found at <https://www.federalgrantswire.com/children-of-incarcerated-parents-web-portal.html#.YUymR7hKiUk> consolidates, in a single online location, information regarding federal resources, grant opportunities, best and promising practices, and ongoing government initiatives that support children of incarcerated parents and their caregivers. The portal provides user-friendly information for stakeholders, including local and state governments, which wish to initiate their own collaborative processes to improve support for these children. For example, visit the portal to view the Children of Incarcerated Parents Framing Paper, which outlines the challenges children of incarcerated parents and their families face and provides strategies for service providers on how to enhance these children's social and emotional well-being.

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